Impact of Digital India on Women: A Case Study of Karnataka State

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1. Introduction:

National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) or Digital Saksharata Abhiyan (DISHA) or Digital India is a flagship programme of the Indian government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. To transform India into a digitally inclusive and leading knowledge society, Hon' Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the Digital India programme on July 1, 2015. This vision can become a reality only when villages across the country become a vibrant part of this mission. Common Services Centers (CSCs) are enabling this vision as access points for delivering e-governance services and digital literacy in rural and remote areas. The mission aims to make one person in every family e-literate, empowering them digitally and mainly focusing on rural population. The government has set up state-wise training centers and partners who are engaged in conducting the course and educating the citizens enrolled in the programme.

"I see technology as a means to empower and as a tool that bridges the distance between hope and opportunity. Digital India is an enterprise for India's transformation on a scale that is, perhaps, unmatched in human history. Digital India is our dream for the nation. When I say 'Digital India' it is not meant for the rich, but for those who are poor. Women must also be made partners in economic development. I have seen that women are very good at adapting to latest technology. We should link women and technology up-gradation." – Prime Minister Narendra Modi's view see women as a crucial agent of economic development of the country and digital India provides a way to tap into the latent potential of the women by providing them with the knowledge of digital world and opening doors to new and confident women entrepreneurs.

The word 'Empowerment' means giving power. According to International Encyclopedia (1999) powers means having the capacity and means to direct one's life towards desired social, political and economic goals. Thus women Empowerment is a process by which women gain greater process and greater control over resources (income, knowledge, information, technology, skill and training). A nation that wants to progress cannot afford to ignore capacity building and empowerment of women. It is now well understood that any attempt to improve the quality of life of people in developing countries would be incomplete without progress towards the empowerment of women. Women's development is inextricably linked with technology. In India, the Ministry of Human Resource

Development **(MHRD-1985)** and the National Commission for Women **(NCW)** have been worked to safeguard the rights and legal entitlement of women. Women empowerment is broadly defined as increasing the ability of women socially, economically and politically. Empowerment is a vigorous process of enabling women to understand their identity, potentiality and power in all spheres of their lives. Women empowerment is merely not related to the external elements but also internal. The internal psychological stability of women is very important in the process of empowerment. It is very important for a women to empower herself within to expose and explore outer world and create space for her enhancement in the society. Women have to understand their importance in the national development which boosts interest in them to face the obstacles and prepare them to overcome.

The Digital India Programme is emerging as a movement for social and economic empowerment while delivering its core mandate of digital access and connectivity for each and every Indian. The Common Services Centers and the Village Level Entrepreneurs, together, are one of the crucial pillars through which the iconic programme is being driven and turned into a reality on a day-to-day basis. The story of this change in motion is far more vibrant and inspiring. It is very interesting that how women in the rural communities are joining this mission while emerging as champions of change in their communities. National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) or Digital Saksharata Abhiyan (DISHA) is an ambitious project aimed at putting an end to digital divide among the citizens of India. The campaign stresses on Digital Literacy and at least making one in each family digitally literate.

Information technology has revolutionized the world as never before. The benefits accrued from the synergy of knowledge and IT need not be restricted to the upper strata of the society but have to freely flow to all segments of the female population. IT sector is considered to be no-discriminating. It is considered to be an equal opportunity employer for men & women. IT are powerful tools for women to use to overcome discrimination, achieve full equality, well being and participation in decisions that impact the quality of their lives and the future of their communities. Women can use technology to successfully build personal confidence & self-esteem that has wider implications in women's live. (Ruchi Malhotra, 2015).

Digital literacy is the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations (Nowell, 2014). NDLM aims to empower the rural masses to come in par with the urban in terms of being able to make use of the opportunities. Those who can operate computers stand a better chance than those who cannot, though literate and otherwise competent, to get even a secretarial job let alone a administrative one (Rao, 2005). This study focuses on how NDLM is empowering rural post graduate female students in being digitally connected and how the students found this training to be. It is clear that, a digitally connected India can help in improving social and economic conditions of people living in rural areas through development of non-agricultural economic activities apart from providing access to education, health and financial services (Ravi, 2016).

Today, technology directly impacts women's development and has enabled their voice to reach out and be viewed globally. In a recent report published by Goggle, it is clear that Internet is empowering Indian women with easy access to information and helping them to make more informed decisions in their day-to-day life. Digitally aware and knowledgeable women can be hailed as holding out great hope for developing countries, and have warned of a growing "digital divide" between rich and poor that must be narrowed by concerted action.

Bridging the Digital Divide is about inclusion and enhancing equal opportunities for all members of society to participate in their economic activities and political decision-making. Despite the major role women play in developing economies, and their potential to contribute even more, the difficulty of accessing resources and basic services denies many women the opportunity to make contributions to their families and society.

Gender is one of the key elements in this process; how to balance development of a society and economy by providing access to information, education and economic and political decision-making to both genders. In this process new ways of gender inclusion need to be enhanced. Women need new skills in the knowledge economy which will allow them to be actors in the new economy and gain benefits from this development. In this regard, empowering women by promoting women's entrepreneurship-this has been identified as an important approach to promote sustainable development. As the statement goes "The digital divide can never be contained in isolation but the effort has to be multi-dimensional and multi-pronged" (Rao, 2005) achieving the dream of Digital India, efforts should be put forth through all the available channels.

By considering the above understanding and observations, there is a need to look into the impact and the role played by the Digital India Initiatives in the process of empowering rural women in Karnataka. It is felt necessary to critically study the implications in creating awareness and improving the knowledge level of rural women through Digital India Initiatives. The aim of this research is to show the position of women in newly emerging areas of information technology and to examine the different ways in which digital India initiatives has benefited women in terms of employment. This paper also examines the effects of digital India initiatives in rural areas.

2. Review of Literature

This review focuses in particular on rural women use of digital ICTs – where communication is through computer-based systems, and including social media. As the review looks at the relationship between ICTs and women's voice in and influence over decision-making, the interactive nature of much digital ICT makes it particularly pertinent. Digital ICTs hold the possibility that larger numbers of women can not only receive information and ideas but also convey them – and this is a necessary, if insufficient, condition for their having voice and influence.

Ruchi Malhotra (2015) describe how the women is empowered through the help of Information technology. It has changed their position from past. The development of IT has enabled the women section to participate in each and every walk of life. It has empowered the women by enhancing their skills, knowledge and income. Flexi timings and work at home with internet has enabled the more women to join the labor force. Thus IT has played a greater role in women's empowerment. It potential to sweep across political, geographical, economic and social barriers is just the leverage that women need to build for themselves a new identity and a more honorable place in society.

Antonio and Tuffley (2014) describe how the idea of a digital divide has developed into an understanding of access to ICTs as a 'multi-faceted phenomenon consisting of four factors that work to regulate access: psychological, material, skills and usage'. All four can prevent women from using digital ICTs to access and communicate information and ideas as, for example, women may assume they are incapable of learning to use ICTs, may not have access to ICT equipment or may not have the resources to pay to use ICTs.

Gurumurthy, (2013) stated that digital ICTs and media also represent a commercial space, influenced by private sector interests. This means existing patriarchal attitudes towards gender can be reproduced as well as challenged in the online environment in ways that can limit the potential of ICTs to be tools for women's empowerment

Asiedu (2012) criticises ICT and development discourse for using the 'language of empowerment' while at the same time presenting women as 'passive recipients' of ICTs rather than examining whether they are able to be 'active users'. Even when women are passive users of ICTs, this can increase their access to services and information in ways that empower them and provide an important base for voice and influence. However, for women to use ICTs to voice their views and influence others, they need also to be active users of digital ICTs.

Torenli (2006) discusses how examining access to ICTs from a social inclusion perspective moves the debate away from 'providing equipment' to underlying structural reasons why some socioeconomic groups lack access.

3. Scope and Methodology

The scope of the present study is limited to examine the impact of Digital India on rural women in Vijayapura District of Karnataka state. The present study is mainly based on the primary data collected from sample respondents and the following limitation has been identified.

- The present study is explorative in nature and restricted geographically to sample population of rural women identified using the purposive sampling method in Vijayapura District, state of Karnataka.
- Further it is restricted to the extent of assessing the impact of Digital India on rural women.
- Geographically it is extended to Vijayapura District Karnataka state only.
- The limitations of the methodologies adopted also apply to the study.

In this study, multi-stage sampling techniques will be used. First stage of sampling consisted of selection of districts, at the second stage Taluks (Blocks) will be selected and in the third stage, villages will be selected. Under this technique, one district will be selected from each revenue division. Four taluks (Blocks) from each district. Total 4

districts, 16 taluks, 1280 women will be selected as respondents for the proposed study. A total of 1280 respondents will be selected randomly for personal interview for data collection.

The research study will be undertaken is exploratory in nature aimed at knowing the impact of Digital India programmes on rural women in Vijayapura District of Karnataka State. Primary and secondary sources will be used for data collection. The secondary data helps to provide a framework and insight based on previous studies. Specific data collecting instruments included questionnaires, literature review will be used. There are various methods such as survey, Interview, Schedule, Observation methods, etc, which are useful to study the problem. The present study uses the survey method, where in structured questionnaire will be used. In this study Interview, Schedule, Observation methods also will be used.

Data and Information Sources:

The study is based on both the primary as well as secondary data.

Sample Size:

Karnataka is considered to be the ninth highest populated state and by area, it is the eighth largest state in India. It covers about 5.83% of the total geographical area of India. As per the census of 2011 the female population is 30,128,640 and male is 30,966,657. Karnataka divided into four revenue divisions and it comprised of 30 districts. Hence, the present study is conducted by focusing the impact of digital India on women of four districts in four revenue districts like, Bengaluru Urban, Mysore, Vijayapura and Raichur.

4. Statement of the Problem:

"IMPACT OF DIGITAL INDIA ON WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF VIJAYAPURA DISTRICT"

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The aim of this research entitled **"IMPACT OF DIGITAL INDIA ON WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF VIJAYAPURA DISTRICT"** is to cover the following objectives:

1) To study the socio-personal characteristics of rural women in Digital India environment.
2) To know the digital media habits of rural women.
3) To find out the extent of knowledge gained by Rural Women from Digital India Initiatives.
4) To show the position of women in newly emerging areas of Digital India.
5) To study the impact of Digital India Initiatives in rural women empowerment.
6) To study the different ways in which Digital India Initiatives has benefited the rural women.

6. Conceptual Framework

For any new research to be technically sound, there is a need for a theoretical frame work which will guide the researchers. With the novel idea of assessing the impact of National Digital Literacy Mission there are a number of theories which can help us in formulating the assessment tools.

The whole idea of increasing digital literacy can be based on the psychological learning theory of Jean Piaget, which states that any new knowledge is absorbed, processed and retained during learning, which is influenced by cognitive, emotional and environmental influences; meaning, acquiring digital literacy is not independent of factors such as education qualification, the mindset to learn and availability of resources.

The Digital Literacy concepts explained by Eshat-Alkalai (2004) sheds light on how a holistic approach is needed to digital educate people using Digital Literacy Resources (DLRs). In this case the resources or lessons provided by the Digital Shaksharata Abhiyaan can be considered as the DLRs and the content can be tested for its usefulness.

The concept of usability is also very important for Digital India Mission to be successful, which means seeing the usage of internet in education, work and home as a cognitive issue and not just as a techno-procedural one.

On the other hand, the digital divide is very evident in India. The digital divide theory postulates that there is an economic and social gap between the population of a nation and their access to technologies pertaining to information and communication and the masses

that are tech savvy are likely to come upon more opportunities than those who are not digitally literate.

7. Hypotheses:

The following research questions has been framed based on the objectives of the study

- What role does the Digital Media Initiatives play in empowering rural women?
- What are their weaknesses and what are their chances?
- What could be done to enhance their effectiveness in raising the level of knowledge?
- To what extent do women perceive information on Digital Media?
- What kind of medium and device is most extensively used?
- Whether the digital media is playing an effective role in creating awareness among rural women regarding social issues.

8. Significance of the study:

This study reinforces the inadequacy of a digital skilling approach alone. Numerous government and private sector-led initiatives are underway to train women to use specific applications like YouTube and PayTM. This is likely to yield positive results in the short-term by allowing women to access information and have greater control over their finances even when they are unable to, or are not allowed to venture out. However, this internet and communication technology-specific training can be problematic as a long-term strategy. While digital economy allows opportunities for 'flexi-work' and diminishes the reliance on physical workspaces, digital literacy must not aid in reinforcing the traditional gendered segregation of private and public. Unless accompanied by broader shifts in social and cultural belief systems, it can lead to further restrictions on the mobility and autonomy of women. Therefore, unless these digital skilling programs are grounded within broader education curricula, they will create a generation of young people that are essentially only application operators, capable of specific tasks; not informed or empowered individuals capable of navigating and challenging deeply entrenched social customs and norms.

The results will help in knowing the present situation in concluding whether gender is an issue in the use of digital platforms. It will also throw light on the impact of Digital India on the women of Karnataka. It helps the Commission to take appropriate measures

in particular and helps the policy makers to frame necessary policies that enhance the availability and use of digital technologies. The results will also be used as input for planners.

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